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SUBJECT: INDIAN RESPONSE TO SIX-PARTY TALKS AGREEMENT:
SUPPORT FOR DENUCLEARIZATION, BUT NO PUBLIC STATEMENT AT
THIS TIME

Classified By: Ambassador David Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) In response to reftel, Ambassador delivered points on the announcement of the "Initial Actions" agreement at Six-Party Talks to Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon on February 15, noting the Six Parties have come up with a way forward on resolving the North Korean weapons program. Menon quickly acknowledged that the agreement has faced controversy, mentioning he had seen former Ambassador Bolton's strong comments on CNN the previous night. Asked by Poloff if the MEA planned to release a statement in support of the agreement, Menon responded that the Indian government decided in a meeting on the evening of February 14 that it did not want to be seen as jumping at every stage of the North Korean crisis, and he added that he was not in favor of MEA going on the public record at this time. Questioning the current deal's difference with the 1994 Agreed Framework, he wondered whether we had seen this all before. He noted that Bolton's comments have "purchase

in the Indian government, which views North Korea as an &A.Q. Khan client state.⁸ &People will take a hard look at this,⁸ he declared. Such a view fuelled the Indian votes against Iran in the IAEA, he added.

¶2. (C) Comment. Poloffs also delivered reftel points to MEA Under Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs) Jayant Khobargade and MEA Director (East Asia) Rajashekhar. In contrast to Menon's seeming dismissal of the significance of this important step toward implementing the September 19, 2005 Agreement, Rajashekhar, speaking before the February 14 MEA meeting, congratulated the U.S. for its role in the agreement and welcomed the announcement as "a positive step in the denuclearization process." At the time, Rajashekhar told Poloff MEA was, indeed, preparing a statement lauding the agreement. Apparently a decision was made at the higher levels of MEA not to come out publicly at this time, which Post interprets not as any lack of support for the Six Party process, but rather as lingering antagonism toward Pakistan's role in the DPRK's nuclear development. Both Menon and MEA have consistently supported the Six-Party Talks. We note that public opinion, at least that which is represented in India's vibrant media, has noted the significance through factual, front page reporting which describes how Pyongyang has "capitulated," "yields," and "agreed to give up nukes," or, as in an editorial in the Hindustan Times, cites a combination of "America's new flexibility" and China's coordinator role as averting a major international crisis.

MULFORD